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And likewise in the Evening

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A

SE R M O N

DELIVERED AT THE

MEETING HOUSE

NEAR THE

MANEPOD, SOUTHWAR

AND KNEWLEDGE IN THE

AT MONNEWEL-STREET, LONDON

OF

NORTH-WEST, VICTORIA

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BY BENJAMIN WILLIAMS, A.M.
HAS A DISCOUNT



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TO
THE DEAR CHURCH AND AUDIENCE,
MEETING NEAR
THE MAZE-POND, SOUTHWARK,
AND
TO ALL IN EVERY OTHER CHRISTIAN
SOCIETY, IN WHICH THE AUTHOR IS
APPOINTED TO LABOR.

BELoved FRIENDS,

I HAD no further intention in delivering the
ensuing plain Sermon, than to excite your
attention at this truly critical juncture. At
the earnest request of some, whose motive I
am perswaded is the public advantage, it now
comes abroad. No wonder that a discourse,
conceived, preached, and published, within the
compass of a very few days, should require
alterations in order to the press, and yet be
deficient in point of exactness; nevertheless,
by the blessing of God, it may assist some in
judging

DEDICATION.

judging for themselves, on this, or any future occasion of the like importance.

Whatever reception it may meet with from others, it is presumed that you will peruse it in love, and continue to pray without ceasing for him, who is honored with a long course in your service, and cordially subscribes,

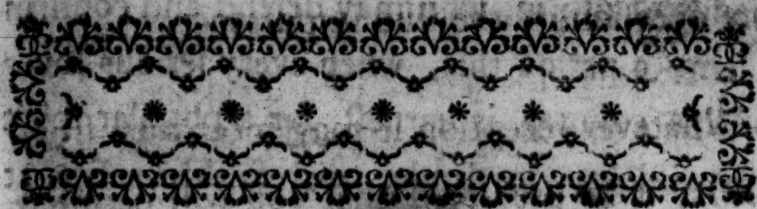
Your most obliged, and

Porter's Buildings,

Oa. 18, 1774.

affectionate Minister,

BENJAMIN WALLIN.



ISAIAH i. 26.

And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, the city of righteousness, the faithful city.

THE kingdom of God is the subject of the pulpit, which is not to be debased with politics, philosophy, or any thing short of the cross, in which the incarnate Son of God made reconciliation for iniquity, that sinners might be saved; nevertheless, the first inspired ministers, yea, our Lord himself, in his course, touched on the times, and warned and directed his audience accordingly.

It is now with us a critical period; a period in which the people are a few days, as it were, intrusted with their own liberties, not, indeed, to hold themselves, but to transfer into the

A

hands

hands of others, who may defend and confirm them; a period this, when every serious lover of his country is earnest for a popular spirit of wisdom, fortitude, and faithfulness; at such a period, my Friends, it is highly reasonable for every man to have his senses about him, and that we remind one another of the duty we owe to ourselves and posterity, there being a certain connexion between a right improvement of the present juncture, and our possession of every thing dear, even to the freedom of preaching the gospel: under these peculiar circumstances, I hope it will not be unseasonable or vain, that I offer some considerations from this divine promise, for the support of them who feared God, in a dark and threatening time. I shall therefore make no further apology.

Nevertheless it seems needful to observe, that it is far from, yea, nothing can be more contrary to my design, than to alienate in the least from a most loyal affection to our rightful Sovereign the King, or to excite disrespect towards any good magistrate, or counsellor under him; I likewise disavow all intention of being invidious against any particular person, which is hateful and vile, and least of all, would

would I discourage your hearts, or impress you with a timorous apprehension that no times can be worse, or that we are irrecoverable; God forbid! My design is purely to instruct the rising generation, and remind others of the nature of our constitution as a people, with the connexion we have with civil government, and our particular concern with it at this instant, that, behaving ourselves like men and christians, we, and our children, may every one sit quietly under his own vine and his own fig-tree, and to this my conscience directs me. These things premised, I proceed to a review of the text, from whence I shall deduce a chain of truths relative to the subject in hand, and then point out the duty of a people who may be, or may think themselves, in any degree, in the like circumstances with Israel, in respect of their counsellors, at the time of this prophecy.

I. Shocking was the state of Judah and Jerusalem, when Isaiah was sent to remonstrate her evil, and her impending judgments. So monstrous the ingratitude of the inhabitants, that the Lord, by his prophet, calls upon the heavens and the earth to hear, and witness

against them; he then reflects on their exceeding wickedness and total degeneracy, verses 4, 5, 6. "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, children that are corrupters." In vain they had been severely chastized, time after time, and are accordingly upbraided; "why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt yet more and more, the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint; from the sole of the foot, even to the crown of the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores." He then bewails their approaching miseries; "your country is desolate, your cities are burnt with fire.—The daughter of Zion is as a cottage in a vineyard, a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city." Yet, by the way, he drops a comfortable word to the faithful among them concerning a remnant, on whose account they were not utterly consumed, and made as Sodom and Gomorrah; he then calls on their wicked rulers, civil and ecclesiastical, under whom, bad as they were, the people howled grievously, to consider their vileness and hypocrisy; they had not cast off the form of religion, or totally forsook the instituted worship of the dispensation they were

were under, as but too many, *now*, who ought to set the multitude a more amiable example; No; they held their sabbaths with oblations and offerings, but at the same time were guilty of oppression, injustice, and cruelty, and nothing is more abominable to an holy God than the sacrifice of the wicked. And accordingly he remonstrates verses 11, 12, “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? Saith the Lord.”—— “When ye come to appear before me, who hath required *this* at *your* hands to tread my courts?” And in verses 14, 15, declares his abhorrence of their new moons, and that he would not regard the stretching forth of their hands though they made many prayers; nevertheless, astonishing grace! he calls them to repentance, with a rich promise of pardon, verse 18. “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” But that no impenitent transgressor should shelter himself under these proclamations of mercy, “the LORD of Hosts, the mighty One of Israel,” declares, saying, “Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies!” verse 24.

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“The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, or the leopard his spots.” Exhortations and promises, however pertinent and gracious, avail not, if those accustomed to do iniquity are left to themselves; unless the Lord’s *hand* is concerned to bring transgressors to repentance, the purposes of his *heart* would be abortive; he therefore declares his resolution to chastize them effectually into a sense of their folly and wickedness, verse 25. “And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin.” The like comparisons we have Ezekiel xxii. 18. “Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross, all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace.” Fit emblems of the corruption, hypocrisy, impudence, and baseness, of a stupid generation, hardened in their iniquity. — Tremble, O my Soul, at any appearance of the like spirit and conduct in the daughter of thy people! To the accomplishment of this holy and merciful resolution, the gracious promise before us is annexed: “And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, the city of righteousness, the

the faithful city." Two things are obvious in the passage, namely, what the LORD would do for Zion, and the happy and honorable consequence. "I will, saith the LORD, restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning." Here is a manifest reference to the original policy of the Jews, which was different from that of other nations, who were governed by kings; the LORD formed this people in a peculiar manner; He was their King, though invisible, so that they were in a state of Theocracy, under the immediate superintendency of God himself, by Moses his minister, who was assisted with a counsel of 70 Elders, eminent for a spirit of wisdom, only for the execution of the will of their divine prince; for neither Moses nor his council had any legislative power, like the counsellors of the earth, as appears from his enquiring of the LORD, what should be done with the man who profaned the sabbath, by gathering of sticks; a practice, by the way, many nominal christians now would not scruple: in this form they continued during the time of this faithful servant, and Joshua his valiant successor. Afterward, when in trouble for their sins, God raised them up judges to
save

save them, who presided over them till the days of Samuel the prophet, when their lusts, as foretold, prompted them to rebel, they, dissatisfied with their superexcellent constitution, their glory and happiness, rejected the LORD as their King, who appointed them another from themselves, though rather in anger than mercy, Hosea xiii. 11. Some good princes succeeded, particularly Hezekiah, mentioned in the beginning of this prophecy, but many wicked kings followed, under whom they degenerated till they were reduced to the shameful and miserable condition we have seen them; for which they were cast into the furnace in Babylon, and long endured the sore displeasure of their offended God; and upon their return from captivity, by Nehemiah and Ezra, they were restored to this kind of democracy or commonwealth, being governed by the High-priest, as chief and president, with the sanhedrim, or council of 70, as before, according to Josephus, that warlike historian. In this state we find them when Alexander was met by Jaddua their High-priest without the gates of Jerusalem, up to which the enraged conqueror was hastening to avenge himself, for that Pontiff's refusing his oath of allegiance,

ance, unto whom he was reconciled, and amazingly submissive, through a well-known extraordinary, or rather supernatural interposition of providence; and sacred history shews that this was their internal policy, when subject to the Romans, in the time of our Saviour.

Thus the Jews were governed at first, and also after the Babylonish captivity; and therefore, however applicable the text to the times of the Messiah, and to his apostles or first ministers, as some would confine it, we may, with the utmost propriety, consider these judges and counsellors of those who were invested with civil authority, the latter of whom evidently resemble that branch of our Legislature, at this time so much the object of attention, with this material exception, that whereas their counsellors had no law-making power, the senate of Britain have this sacred trust reposed in them.—Our singular and excellent constitution is mixed; it includes kingly power, which we have seen was not in the original state of the Jews; we are also partly under nobles, but it does not appear that the princes of Israel, as such, had a proper stated share in the national government, as the peers among us; their grand authorita-

tive council was the sanhedrim, and our immediate concern in this juncture is with the great council of the land, now upon election, as our guardians in the state. So then, this divine promise is perfectly adapted to instruct us on the present very critical and interesting occasion.

Now it seems that it was not with Judah and Jerusalem as heretofore; through their own folly, their constitution was altered, and in these degenerate times rebellious princes ruled over them; for princes may be rebels, against the most High, by male administration; so base were these wretched chief rulers, that they are declared to be companions of thieves. No wonder that under such infamous heads, subordinate magistrates should be corrupt; thus, going after covetousness, those of Israel now were guilty of the most flagrant injustice and cruelty, inasmuch that the faithful city was become a treacherous harlot; the city once full of judgment and righteousness, was now a lodgment for murderers, with impunity! Far be it that our dear country should ever be carried to so great a pitch of iniquity and danger! In these sad circumstances, destruction from the Almighty

mighty might have been expected, but lo! mercy interposes; the LORD, for his name's sake, is graciously pleased to undertake for the repentance of this profligate people, and that when he had purged away their dross, and taken away all their tin, he would restore their judges as at the *first*, and their counsellors as at the *beginning*: i. e. bring them to their original form of government, and raise up wise and faithful men, under whose just and prudent administration they should recover to their first and pure state: "afterward thou shalt be called," i. e. thou shalt be, and be truly reported, "the city of righteousness, the faithful city." Having stated the idea of our text, permit me,

II. To lay before you some truths relating to civil government, and our concern with it, that result from this account, and the following, I think, are plainly deducible;

That civil Magistrates and Counsellors are essential to the existence of a people.

That in the beginning of a State her great men are, for the most part, wise, good, and true.

That the counsellors of a nation may in time be corrupt, and prove unjust and cruel.

That the opportunity for the wicked to ascend into power, must be owing to the degeneracy of the populace.

That while evil counsellors have the sway, a sinful nation or city cannot recover its purity and character.

That a restoration of discreet faithful judges and senators, is alone from the most High; and finally,

That this blessing is not to be expected until, by some means, a national repentance and reformation, is procured.

On these seven *pillars*, or rather *links* of *one* chain, I shall briefly discourse, and then point out the duty of a people, who have, or who think that they have cause to complain of any measures taken by their authoritative counsellors.

And first, it will surely be admitted that civil magistrates and counsellors, invested with public authority, belong to the character of a people: It is the united voice of reason, experience and scripture. Mankind are like sheep, and cannot be happy without a shepherd. The multitude ever stand in need of direction and defence. A *people*, strictly speaking, are a number of individuals united by common consent, under a particular government, suited

to their peculiar circumstances. This idea the LORD gives us of Israel whom he had chosen, Isaiah xliii. 21. "This people have I *formed*." Take away the *form*, and the nation is dissolved. Indeed, as it was with the priests of the law, and also the prophets and ministers of God, under every dispensation, so it is with civil magistrates or the counsellors of the earth; they die, or otherwise occasionally fail from their seats; and these changes do not destroy the existence of a state; nevertheless it cannot long subsist without governors; if these vacancies are not soon and well filled, a state of anarchy ensues, and a dissolution is at hand; in this way many large and populous nations, once famous and formidable in the earth, have declined, and are no more; witness the four great monarchies, antecedent to the setting up the kingdom of the Messiah, whose history stands connected with that of the church, in the sacred account; not a single descendant from the ancient Assyrians, Persians, Greeks or Romans, can be found. The Jews, who were scattered among them from generation to generation, yet remain, but *they* are lost in oblivion; and such will

will be the end of the most flourishing kingdom, our own not excepted, if by any means government is overthrown, and the people as sheep without a shepherd, are in confusion; civil magistrates, or counsellors invested with legislative authority, is a wise and merciful appointment of the most High, without which the world itself could not stand; and accordingly it is declared, Rom. xiii. 1. "The powers that be are ordained of God." It is better to be under a deficient government, than to be lawless, which is not only to be vile, but miserable; wherefore, saith the apostle, verse 5. "Ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." To resist a wise and good magistrate is sinful and pernicious; it is to resist the ordinance of God.

Now at the beginning, or first constituting any kingdom or state, counsellors are for the most part wise men, and faithful. In the days of Moses, and Joshua, yea, and in all the days of the elders, who outlived Joshua, which had known all the works of the LORD, Israel served him; Joshua xxiv. 31. which is a proof that they had good and discreet leaders, the people were then under no temptation from
their

their magistrates to be venal. Thus a newly gathered nation is like the natural body in its youthful vigour, sound, strong and healthy ; at least in the ordinary course, no defect or disorder appears in the *head* or *heart* ; which, according to the metaphor used in the context of Israel, answers to their priests, princes and other men in power, and is applicable to the governing persons of any state, who are as it were the principal, and the vitals of the body politic. The occasions of first collecting and forming a people conduce to this purity, and the like may be observed of any great revolution in a kingdom by which the inhabitants are delivered from evil counsellors who oppress them ; such as we had on the coming of our glorious deliverer King William the third, and in consequence in the accession of the present family to the throne, on the decease of a prince, when the wicked in power had nearly executed their deep-laid designs against our religion and liberties, never to be forgot ; then a sense of late imminent danger, and almost miraculous deliverance, so operated in the minds of the serious of every denomination, that, without respect of persons, they

they chose none but men of ability and character, in whom a sense of honour prevailed; so that those in authority were faithful and wise, and the wicked dared not to walk on every side, as they do when the vilest men are exalted.

Alas, this soundness in the vital powers of a nation lasts not for ever! through the depravity of fallen human nature, and a variety of occasions and temptations, the magistrates and counsellors of a kingdom may corrupt, and become unfaithful and cruel. It is notorious that, through sensual indulgence, long external ease and freedom from danger, nations grow proud and carnally secure, inadvertent and careless; then subtle, self-seeking men take the lead, and abuse their power to gratify their avarice and other base lusts, till they become like the wicked shepherds complained of, Ezek. xxxiv. 4. that with force and with cruelty they ruled the people, and caused them to howl.

But, whence the opportunity of these wicked counsellors? No doubt from the degeneracy of the common people. An ill disposed citizen, “says * a celebrated writer, can do no great

* Machiavel.

harm, but in an ill disposed city." And it has been justly observed, that "bribery in a minister supposes a corrupt people." This maxim is justified by the scripture account; thus in the fine illustration, by which degenerate Israel is described in the context; comparing this incorporate people to the human frame, it is said, verse 6. that " * from the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it;" as natural diseases ordinarily begin in the lower and extream parts of the body, and gradually ascend to the vitals; in like manner the body politic, especially of a † religious kind, as that of the Jews, and so of any nation professing christianity, and favored with gospel light, its decay is first seen in the multitude, and those of a lower class, from whom it ascends to the nobler rank: If the people are not debased, wicked men will find it hard to gain the ascendancy over them. The nation of the Jews at this shameful period were not *barely* corrupted,

* A like description is found, Deut. xxvii. 35.

† Religious, that is, on the principles of divine revelation; as for the religion of nature, since man's apostacy, it avails nothing to remission or real holiness.

but they are styled, verse 4. *corrupters*; the people and their counsellors corrupted one another, and mutually delighted in their abominations, as complained of in Jer. v. 31. This manner of process, from the lower to the higher rank, unto a total degeneracy, if not timely prevented, is both *natural* and *moral*. It is *natural*, at least so far as the legislative power is elective in the people; this is not the case altogether in our happy constitution; indeed the doctrine of indefeasible hereditary right has been justly exploded, and can never be endured by a free nation, yet the throne of great Britain legally descends in a Protestant family, who rule in righteousness, as it now doth in the illustrious house of our present Sovereign: May it succeed in the same precious line, with joy; to the latest generation! The aristocratical branch of our government, or that branch with which the nobles are invested, perpetuates from sire to son, on the like condition; but the representatives of the people, who answer to counsellors in the text, being chosen by themselves, cannot long subsist in a course of iniquity to our hurt, unless the nation itself is shamefully ~~provoked~~; so that when the vicious are in power, we may be certain

hereditary

certain that there is horrible wickedness in the land, and that the body of the people are depraved. If the electors were free from every selfish and sinister end, if they unanimously voted with a single eye to the public welfare, and out of pure love to their country, if they would shake their hands from holding of bribes, and have no respect of persons in their choice, it must be under a diabolical disguise that any other, than a man of ability and character, a *real* sound patriot, should obtain a seat in the house. The *moral* cause of this mode of operation in a degenerate political body is from above, in a way of judgment, for their sins and transgressions: When a people forsake the LORD, and provoke him to anger, it is becoming his righteousness to abandon them to foolish and wicked rulers, who oppress and mislead them, and destroy the way of their paths, see chap. iii. and 12. bad laws, and worse examples, daily increase under such evil counsellors, and, if a nation, in these circumstances, have no feeling, they are in the last stage of corruption, and in the utmost danger of being totally ruined.

Nothing can be more evident than that; in this wretched state, while base men prevail,

there is no hope that a city or nation should recover its original purity and character; *when* the LORD restored to Jerusalem her judges, as at the first, and her counsellors as at the beginning, *then*, and not till *then*, does she recover her former good state; “*afterwards* thou shalt be called, the city of righteousness, the faithful city.” It is in vain to expect a reformation under dissolute magistrates: if the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint, what hopes can there be of a recovery? if infidels and libertines preside, will they be concerned to promote true religion and manners, or check the growing impiety and vice of the age? Can it be soberly expected that such men should frame wholesome laws, or see to the execution of any already existing? On the contrary, “do not the wicked walk on every side,” do they not multiply, prosper, and grow impudent in their blasphemy and licentiousness, insomuch that wherever we turn they set their mouth against heaven, and their tongue walk through the earth, “when the vilest men are exalted,” Psal. xii. 8.

Nevertheless the case is not desperate; the Most High, who changeth the times and the seasons,

seasons, can at his pleasure recover a people, however sunk and enslaved by their folly; but nothing short of his special interposition will heal them. "I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning." From the hand of his providence and grace *alone* this mercy is to be expected. Many are the wonderful turns in the history of Israel, by which the LORD, for his name's sake, restored and saved the people of his love; he restored them judges and counsellors, when they were almost swallowed up by the wicked; and he must be little acquainted with that of his own nation who need be told that, in like manner, we have been repeatedly rescued from the hands of our enemies. Who can be a stranger to the wisdom and fidelity of our great men at the glorious revolution; when a prince ascended the throne, as the unclouded morning, and clear shining after the rain of a dark and threatening administration? And when the wicked rose again, and another storm was gathering, did not the Almighty instantly disappoint their mischievous decrees, and spare not even the *Royal* life, to give us judges and counsellors as in time past?

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Did he not turn out the *vile*, and set the *precious* in their stead, even faithful magistrates, and able common-wealth's men? and it is an humbling consideration, that in less than threescore years there should be any just reason again to complain.

But this indulgence from heaven is not to be expected, till by some means national repentance is procured. "I will turn my hand upon thee, and will purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin." These miracles of mercy, and best gifts of providence are not for them who persist in their rebellion; a people hardened against the voice of the most threatening dispensations, and even under the faithful preaching of the word, in which the wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness of men, must be convinced of their folly, and purged from their iniquity, in order to a restoration of their state; till then, they will hate faithful magistrates, and it may be, treat them with contempt; so that a recovery is not to be hoped for, in favor of the impenitent; it is therefore very melancholy and threatening, when the means of discountenancing vice, and promoting moral virtue, are neglected and despised.

ed. Many years after the révolution we had respectable and voluntary societies for the detecting of profaneness and villany, by which, at least, the wicked were driven into corners, and the rising generation were not so much exposed to those shocking examples, now almost ever before them; these attempts may have fallen into improper hands, and the best of means misapplied or abused; but the discouraging all particular societies for the reformation of manners is, in my view, a very awful symptom, and especially, I am sorry to say it, when, in all appearance, so little care is taken by many in civil office to execute the laws, even against open and shameful offenders, or men would not dare to fill the air in the streets with such volleys of oaths and imprecations, or prostitutes and beggars croud about us wherever we go, as they do.

These are the truths which lie involved in this divine promise to the Jews under the circumstances they were in, a remembrance of which I thought seasonable: Authorised counsellors are essential to the existence of a people; civil government is therefore to be esteemed a blessing from the Almighty, and
consci-

conscientiously held in reputation; for the most part at the beginning of a state, and also after any considerable revolution in its favor, those in authority are wise men and true; but such is the depravity of fallen nature, and so many are the temptations to vice, that in time, a national council may corrupt, and become unfaithful and cruel; that the opportunity evil men have of ascending to the seat of authoritative direction arises from the degeneracy of the people. But, while the wicked sway, there can be no hope of recovering to former purity and character; a restoration of good counsellors, as at first, is alone from the most High; and, finally, that this blessing is not to be expected till by some means a public reformation and repentance is brought about. And now, Beloved,

III. What remains, if at any time we are grieved, or think we have reason to complain, but that we cordially turn to the LORD; be active and faithful in our station; and patiently wait his salvation?

1. I take not upon me to ascertain the whole ground of a too general dissatisfaction, though I cannot think it without any cause,
much

much less would I drop a word to increase it; it would be a joy to offer any thing that might conciliate the minds of those who complain; to represent them all malcontents and murmurers, is, I am sure, not the way, if consistent with charity and truth; far be it to promote a needless disquietude; but our grievances are in every one's mouth on the present occasion, nor is it unbecoming to remind one another, when we apprehend threatening measures are taken, provided it be done without prejudice and passion; we may decently, yea, and loudly complain, when we feel, or, to what a pass are we come! Nevertheless, the severest reflections, and most bitter complaints, however just, or tempered with decency and manners; or any thing else we are capable of towards our relief, can have no saving effect, if we remain impenitent; our help is from him against whom we have sinned, and continue to transgress. The faithful bitterly mourned their miserable captivity in Babylon, and enumerate their sorrows in a style most pathetic. But is this all? No; sensible of the cause; namely, their manifold sins and atrocious backslidings, they stir up one ano-

ther to repentance; Lament. iii. 40, 41.
“ Let us, in like manner, search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD: Let us lift up our hearts with our hands to God in the heavens.” If we were in the greatest distress, and even had occasion to complain of oppression and cruelty, (I pray God this may never be the case) but all this would indicate our iniquity: you see that if evil counsellors are preferred, it must be owing to the corruption of the people; we may complain, and we ought to remonstrate, but our first and principal concern is to employ our breath, as the Israelites did, in crying with self-abasement, and contrition to the LORD, who alone can restore and save us, that, being purged from our iniquity, we may obtain his gracious favor, “ by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice,” and in whose hand are the hearts of all counsellors. The taste of the proud may disdain it, but, if there be a God, if a providence exists, if there is any truth in divine revelation, or in universal history, and if the dispensations of the Almighty in all ages past is to be regarded; in short, if we are not determined Atheists, Deists, or Libertines,

bertines, we must acknowledge that the first step towards a national recovery, is with unfeigned humiliation and unreserved confession of our sins, earnestly to implore his pardon and favor; and, seeing the iniquities of a land result from the defect, or ill conduct of its particular inhabitants, in this business every man should begin with *himself*. Jer. viii. 6. when the people of Jerusalem were slidden back by a perpetual backsliding, the LORD says, "I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright." They were not silent; much talk there might be of the times, every one complaining of the venality, corruption and wickedness of the age, the way of the multitude and the mal-conduct of some in the administration of government; yea, some confessions might be made in a general way to God and one another; yet they spake not aright; how so? saith the LORD, "No man repented *him* of *his* wickedness, saying, what have *I* done? but every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle." Here was no self-examination, no bringing matters home to the conscience, no personal repentance, therefore all

their talk was deceitful and vain; it was no repentance in the sight of God; thus often an hypocritical generation of formal professors, speak much of corruption and the bad conduct of superiors, or others, but pass by their own transgressions; every one impenitent and hardened in his course, still provoke the LORD to his face. He only speaks aright that says; What have I done? And is there not a cause? That man is singular and happy indeed, who, upon a serious and faithful scrutiny, can acquit himself from having in any degree, at least inadvertently, contributed to the national guilt, in natural, civil, or religious life; nor is any man fit to join in social acknowledgments to God for public iniquity, until he has confessed alone for himself.

Time would fail, even to mention every distinct public vice by which our land is disgraced; but on this occasion, however unpleasant, it is needful to remind you of some principal instances of that woful degeneracy we lament. And here I must not entirely pass by the prostitutes, thieves, and vagabonds that swarm, I have no inclination to exaggerate, but, by all that I can learn from those, who in time past, or of late have travelled

travelled, that in this respect we are worse than most of our neighbouring countries; be that as it may, our streets, jails, courts of justice, and frequent large executions, manifest a prodigious increase of these wretches among us; and it is truly astonishing to consider with how little emotion or concern the generality seem to hear of the many scores of felons tried every monthly sessions, the cart loads of criminals that are turned off at Tyburn, and the numbers that are annually transported to our colonies; sad instances of our dissolute and stupefied state as a people! But the melancholy aspect is not confined to this vulgar class; there is but too much reason to complain, that our principles and manners are almost universally debased; religion, honor, and a public spirit are rarely to be found, while deism, profaneness, and every kind of immorality, through an excess of profligacy in high and low life, comes in like a flood, and threaten to overwhelm us. Deism, not long since, particularly in the beginning of this century, has been justly and fully exposed, and in a manner exploded, by many excellent pens, and its advocates silenced; but, although its theory, will not bear examination-

amination. * Deists, open and disguised, are numerous, and daily increasing, insomuch, that in almost every promiscuous or occasional company we meet with a sceptic, or scoffer at divine revelation; nor is it marvellous in an age, when some who plead for its authority, nevertheless strangely deny its distinguishing truths, and when its sacred rites, under the present dispensation, at least, are neglected by the generality of nominal christians; for nothing strikes more directly against the credit of revelation, than trifling with the positive institutions it proclaims. As to the day of

* On a late journey, in a populous town, once famous for a large body of Protestant Dissenters, now declined in their number, upon conversing with the minister, he told me, that if any principles advanced in the place, he apprehended, that they were those of the Deists, who abounded in the street we were then passing. Many of them were subtle and bold in their opposition to the scripture, notwithstanding several of their companions had recanted in the views of eternity, declaring, that in no other book, than the bible, they found any hope; and one in particular, it is said, left a paper for that purpose to be read at his interment, which was decently suppressed, that no offence might be taken. It is to be feared that this is too much the case in many other places.

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the LORD, more immediately set apart for sanctuary service, and to keep holy to his name, though many of various denominations attend public worship, there is reason to fear that a far greater number scarcely go so far in the form of religion; it is notorious, that the multitude of every rank most shamefully prostitute the Sabbath, if not to secular business, which is too frequently the case, yet to sensual pleasures, in spite of all laws, human and divine: the noise and riot of the populace on that day in the streets and fields, is become a great nuisance to all sober people; indeed we are not interrupted by authority; but may it not be deemed a kind of persecution by connivance, when for want of putting the laws into execution against Sabbath-breaking, our magistrates permit the profane to disturb them that fear God in their closets and families? So little regard is now paid to a day, once in a manner held sacred through the nation; the polluting of which, is an inlet to all manner of disorder and wickedness, and proves fatal to millions. I am sorry to tell it, that a late earnest and humble petition, signed by a great number of respectable persons, for some further check to the horrid impiety,

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impiety, not barely failed of success, but was treated with *derision*; to mention in what assembly would be too shocking, but it was derided, and that by some who are now, it seems, bowing to be guardians of our liberties and religion. To pass by many other things, it is not a little provoking, that when our necessary taxes are a burthen already too heavy; when, through a real or artificial scarcity, provision is at so excessive a price, that multitudes of the honest and industrious poor can scarce obtain a meal's-wheat more than once or twice a week; when bankrupts are, it may be, seven times the number than formerly; yea, and when we are in so unnatural and dangerous a contest with our wide-extended American colonies, where thousands, and ten thousands of our dear innocent fellow christians, are in the deepest calamity, and many of them in fear of a miserable end; I say, it is not the least of our provocations, that under these awful and threatening circumstances, our vanity is not abated; dissipation and pleasure still daily increase, insomuch that, like the Jews in their degenerate state, our land is full of horses, and there is no end of our chariots; and, if covetousness after this world is idolatry, our idols are many; and

and what is still worse, there seems little concern about seeking the LORD, as heretofore, when clouds of darkness hung over us. National fasts, by authority, are to be left with our governors; but the pious in the land have, with decency and success, joined in prayer to the Almighty on occasions less alarming than those now subsisting. With pleasure we find these solemnities recommended in associating letters from our brethren in different parts of the kingdom; they are worthy our imitation; but, alas! of late, in these populous cities, where professors abound, there seems but very little heart for such service; the generality are too much otherwise engaged. Indeed we have some meetings in course that are tolerably social; but to what purpose are our religious assemblies, if we are not seriously and deeply concerned for the sins and calamities of our country? Now in all this do we not walk contrary to the voice of God's providence? and how provoking to him, may be seen in that striking passage, *Isaiah xxii. 12, 13*, which runs in these words; "In that day did the LORD God of Hosts call to weeping and mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth; and behold, joy and gladness,

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slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die." And, what is the consequence of this riot and impious contradiction to the Almighty? Tremble, ye obstinate and scornful of the land!—"And it was revealed in mine ears, by the LORD of Hosts," saith the prophet; "surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you, till ye die, saith the LORD God of Hosts." Far be this awful doom from our dear country; but many of its inhabitants have too evidently forsaken the LORD, and cast away his word. No wonder if their root should be as rottenness and their blossom should go up as dust, Isaiah v. 24. Through effeminate pleasures and infidelity, we are very much sunk in our national capacity, courage and union; O that we could lay it to heart, and turn unto the LORD, who is able to restore us, and wait, that he may be gracious to those who fear him!

But humiliation and prayer are not the only things incumbent on a people in the like circumstances with the Jews; we must be active in our station to procure faithful judges, and exert our influence in favor of those who may
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be wise and good counsellors. When Moses pleaded, in behalf of the terrified people at the red sea, *Exod. xiv. 15.* the LORD said unto him, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." All means in our power must succeed our prayers for the restoring our state. At this instant we can do more than barely remonstrate to God and the King. Our cries and complaints are deceitful and vain, if we are slothful, or foolishly neglect the opportunity in providence of acting for ourselves; let us up to the business in hand; now is the time to step forward and bear our part in the choice of a Senate who may revive and defend us: Let us seek wisdom from the LORD who directeth all hearts; and having obtained all the intelligence we can, relating to candidates for our trust, and well weighed their connexions and character, let us be free from any private, personal, or secular motive, and honestly vote with a view to the good of our country, irrespective of any other consideration whatever; treat every gentleman who solicits with all respect due to his rank; to be uncivil is neither sense nor religion; but remember, that your judgment and conscience

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is due to no man; no man is entitled to your voice, however amiable his character; or whatever service he may have done you or any of your nearest relations. Obligations laid on us with a view to purchase a vote, may be justly deemed one species of bribery and corruption, and it were to be wished that all previous canvassing and promising were abolished, for they naturally obstruct a genuine free election;— But I forbear;—if, after all our best endeavours we should not succeed, then may we boldly have recourse to the most High under whatever grievance may ensue, and patiently wait his salvation who changeth the times and the seasons at his pleasure.

In one word; may we live peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty, as those who fear the LORD, and rejoice that his throne is forever; whose sceptre is a sceptre of righteousness! The almighty Saviour will subdue all our enemies, and ease himself of his adversaries in due time; even Jesus, the prince of the kings of the earth. Trust therefore in him, who, as Mediator, is over all, and, as the Son of the Father, God blessed for ever, Amen.

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